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RHYTHM



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JOHN BONHAM



THE SHOCKING EXCESSES OF THE BIGGEST, BADDEST DRUMMER THE WORLD HAS EVER KNOWN!

RHYTHM BEGINNERS: LOOKING AFTER YOUR CYMBALS



NEW GEAR REVIEWED



PETE LOCKETT
WORLD CHAMPION PERCUSSIONIST

KULA SHAKER
TOUR DIARY



DRUM WORKSHOP SNARES



BOSPHORUS MASTER JAZZ SERIES

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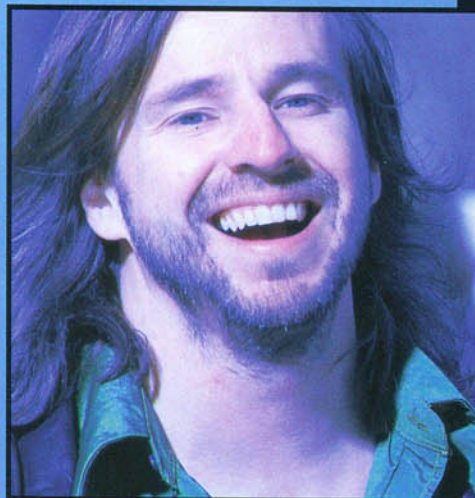
WIN AKIRA JIMBO'S YAMAHA SNARE DRUM AND PREMIER'S CABRIA KIT

PEOPLE



Peter Lockett

Sound And Vision



He's from Portsmouth. His *Hand To Drum* series spans five years of *Rhythm* history. He's the UK's most unhinged percussionist. You might think you know all there is to know about Peter Lockett. But you don't..

PETER FENDS OFF AN ASSAULT FROM A DEMENTED TABLA-EATING CYBORG

To regular *Rhythm* readers, Peter Lockett is revered as the man who knows everything that's worth knowing about the percussive side of world music. For those of you who aren't regular, Pete is a multi-talented

drummer and percussionist whose session credits include Björk, Kula Shaker, Beth Orton and Transglobal Underground. Plus, as one of Europe's leading percussionists and tabla players, he is an integral member of various percussion duos and groups with other world famous drummers, including Bill Bruford and Joji Hirota.

He's also an extremely well read chap with enough theories about music to fill several interviews, using keen illustrations and anecdotes to demonstrate his points. For example, one of Pete's firmest beliefs is that individuality in music is far more important than getting bogged down with the technicalities of one's instrument.

"Quite often when you learn an instrument you're questioning yourself, thinking, 'Well, is it good enough?' or that other people are 'better' than you," says Pete. "I think comparing yourself to other people is very negative and can be very self damaging. I heard of a guy in Europe, a guitar player, a really good guitar player, actually, who some months ago tried to kill himself because he thought he wasn't good enough, which is very deep and very sad. And I'm sure a lot of people feel like that. But music's not like that, music's about enjoyment and sharing. It's not about barriers, saying, 'I'm up on the stage 'cos I'm fucking good'. Bullshit! You're up on the stage because you're a person in the same room with loads of other people who hopefully can get something out of the performance together."

Talking to Pete, it soon becomes apparent that the notion of sharing music and creating music independently, as opposed to conforming to more orthodox practices, is central to his approach toward his playing.

"It's important not to adhere to any tradition too much," he affirms. "That's one of the real dangers of learning something like Indian drumming – that the tradition is so strong it can swamp any creativity that might be there. There

are so many rules and regulations. There's a great quote from Toffler in *Future Shock*, which says: 'The imagination is only free when fear of error is temporarily laid aside'. That's really important, and a lot of people don't necessarily think about that with their music; they're going on with preconceptions."

And it's not only Indian music that bogs people down with these preconceptions.

"I think a lot of people don't know what to do when given a free rein. It's very difficult for people to choose, and that's why you often get a lot of copycat players in any instrument, because then it's a known quantity. You go to a gig and you see such and such a player, and people like it, so you think, 'People like it, I'll play like that so people will like what I do'. It's natural, it's obvious, but to go out and play with a free pallet is completely different."

YOU'LL HAVE REALISED BY NOW THAT PETER Lockett is a man who is passionate about music and who puts a lot of thought into what he does. However, many of his philosophies have come not so much from hours of sleepless nights trying to work out what it's all about, but from pivotal moments in his career that have turned up out of the blue. Even his relatively late start in the fine art of drumming, at the age of nineteen, when he was working as a docker in Portsmouth, was anything but premeditated.

"It was a bizarre thing, I was just walking past a drum shop and I thought, I'll have a drum lesson, for no readily explainable reason," he remembers. "I went in and it made sense to me in a way that other things in my life hadn't before – you know, education or anything like that."

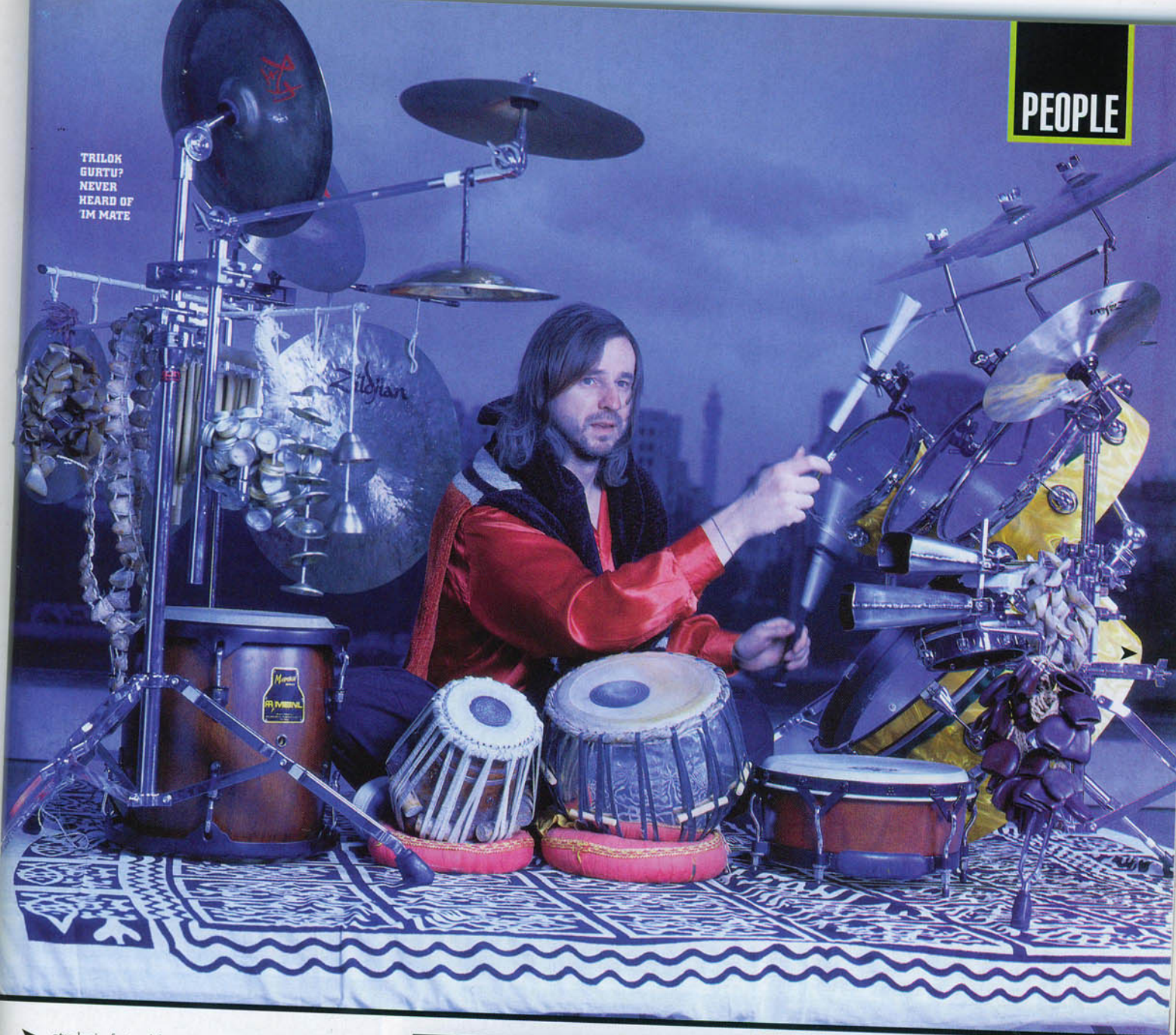
Similarly, his decision to transform himself from punk rock kit player to tabla guru dude was totally unexpected.

"I was playing in a punk band on the London rock scene, and I accidentally stumbled across an Indian gig. It was Zakir Hussain and Ali Akbar Khan, and it was amazing. I didn't know what they were doing. When you see tabla for the first time, a good player, it's the most amazing thing, it's stunning. I had no concept of what he was doing, but that made an impact on me: Later I saw tabla lessons advertised in the local adult education magazine, and I was down there like a shot."

Of course, the actual transformation took somewhat longer, several years of dedicated

WORDS: MARK WALKER
PICTURES: JAMES CUMPSTY

TRILOK
GURTU?
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study, in fact, although you'd presume it would have been a fairly enjoyable period of learning. "Yeah, pretty much, but it can be frustrating," Pete explains. "Instruments like the tabla and the mridangam are very different to percussion instruments like udu, congas or bongos. You can immediately make a sound on those, there's no problem with that. Of course to articulate with technique is different, but you can make a sound. With tabla, it's probably eighteen months before you can make a sound at all, it just sounds terribly pedestrian, the articulation of how you play the drums. And it's very easy to be dominated by that and just give up. I don't know if I could learn tabla now if I had to start again. It's the same with the kit drumming: when I first played the kit I used to stay up all night practising. I can't see myself doing that now. So it's like blind learning, where you can imagine the end result but you're quite happy that you're not there yet, and you're just learning by rote."

As far as studying goes, at present Pete is more interested in *why* he's playing as opposed to *how*.

"The area to master is your philosophy of what you're doing and why you're doing it, primarily. I want to be able to use what I can do effectively, and for me, to get more technically able isn't the answer to making music. In fact, if anything, I want

my playing to be dirtier, I want less technique than I've got."

And this 'dirtier' attitude came from another sudden flash of inspiration.

"One of the turning points for me was listening to an album by Keith Jarrett called *Spirits*. He

played it all himself, he did everything: tablas, shakers, piano, guitar, saxophone, flutes, everything. I first got the album because it had tablas on it; you know, closed mind, 'Wow, Keith Jarrett playing tablas, I'm going to get into that!' And of course, I got it home, and in my opinion at

PETE'S SETUP

SINGLE-HEADED CUSTOM-MADE PREMIER GENISTA DRUM KIT

8"x6", 10"x6", 12"x6", 14"x6" tom-toms
20"x10" bass drum

Top section of 12" Meinl Djembe
Percussion rack: cowbells, tamborims, crasher

Set of three tablas (tuned to C/D)

Meinl tambora
22" Remo djun-djun
14" Remo djun-djun
Meinl bongos

CYMBALS: ZILDJIAN

8" A Custom splash
11" Oriental
15" Azuka Latin Multi crash
20" A Custom Projection ride
14" New Beat hi-hats
12" China Trash
16", 17" A Custom crash
20" Oriental Classic China
20" Wind gong
Opera gong (up)
Opera gong (down)
12" Jing gong
15" Fuyin gong
10" Boa gong
Zil-Bels/Burma bell/Earth Plate

"I THINK DEVELOPING TECHNICALLY IS AS MUCH BASED ON FEAR AS IT IS ON ANYTHING ELSE; WHEN I PLAYED THE DRUM KIT, IT WAS A DEFENCE TO GET TECHNICALLY BETTER, AND I WAS BUILDING A WALL AROUND MYSELF WHICH INHIBITED MY PLAYING MUSIC WITH OTHER PEOPLE"

➤ that time it was rubbish, so I just gave it away. About eighteen months later someone bought me the same record for Christmas, and it was incredible – it made such an impact on me, an impact that totally changed how I see music. If you listen to it, he's playing tablas with mallets and stuff, but what he's doing is following the contours of the music and making great music on the tablas with an unorthodox approach. And it made me realise that you can make music on an instrument without having any technique. Of course you've got to be of a musical mind, like Keith Jarrett. But it made me think, 'Well, maybe I'm not on the right path here'."

You were too purist perhaps?

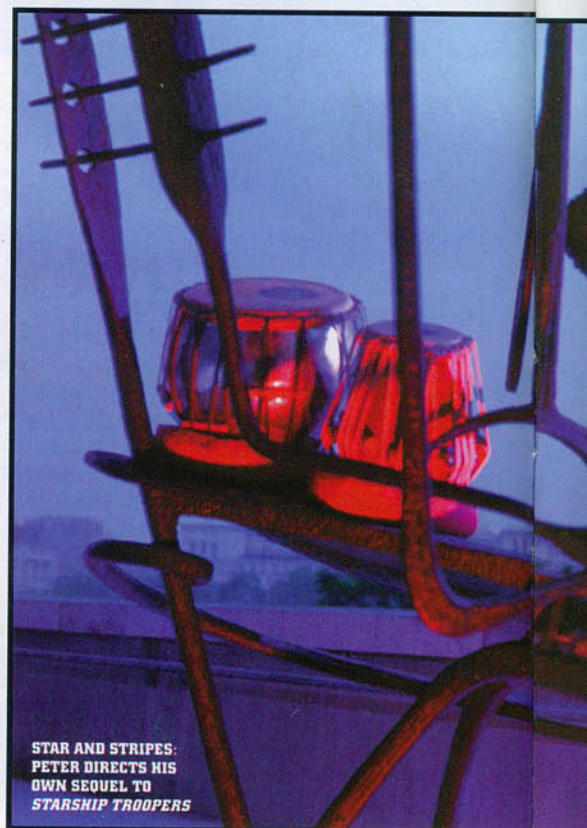
"Not too purist, maybe too... um... it's a fear. I think developing technically is as much based on fear as it is on anything else; when I played the drum kit, it was a defence to get technically better, and I was building a wall around myself which inhibited my playing music with other people. So I'd get into a musical situation, and my preconceptions of what was good drum-wise might not fit the music, but I'd say, 'Well I'm good technically so it doesn't matter', which, of course,

is bollocks. You've got to find what's right for the music. I think a lot of people use stunning technique as a barrier between them and other people."

LAST YEAR AT THE SOUTH BANK'S RHYTHM Sticks festival, Pete starred with Bill Bruford in one of the main headline acts, Network Of Sparks, a



SOUTH BANK STORY:
PETE ROCKS THE ROOF



STAR AND STRIPES:
PETE DIRECTS HIS
OWN SEQUEL TO
STARSHIP TROOPERS



LUCKILY FOR PETER, HIS MAGIC CARPET CAME EQUIPPED WITH AN ADEQUATE PERCUSSION SETUP

playing the Indian stuff and loads of different things. We've just recorded a CD, which was live in Belgium, which is due out in September. We've got a lot of dates around the UK coming up, and we've got a 30-date tour at the end of the year in Europe. That's just purely a percussion show, but what we've got for the *Rhythm Sticks* festival is the *Taiko to Tabla Club Mix*. It's with a DJ and a VJ – a guy on visuals – and we're merging our set forms live with the DJ who is mixing in tracks. It works well, we did it at the ICA a few months ago.

"The other project is with a guy called David Toop," he continues. "He plays everything: pedal steel guitar, keyboards, plus hundreds of weird instruments. It is, and I quote (*Pete picks up promotional blurb*): 'Soundscapes from the ethereal delicate to the dense and dark'. So there you go. I'm going to be playing different things in that, like tabla tarang, which is a set of tuned tablas, an African metallic balafon, and loads of multi-percussion stuff. I'll also be using electronics; I've got a Theremin, an effects unit and a Jam Man, which I can put live percussion loops down with."

Ah, the Jam Man. The *Rhythm Seminar* room was the place to be last November at the *National Music Show*, where Pete's set was certainly one of the highlights, not least because of the incredible live loops he created on tabla using the Jam Man. How does that work then?

"It's a digital delay unit essentially, but it records audio via a mixer," Peter explains in an intimidatingly sagacious manner. "Basically, you record a loop with whatever instrument you choose, and then you can record over that as many instruments as you like. With the full memory upgrade it's got 32 seconds of memory, so you can have a loop 32 seconds long, with as many layers as you want, without losing any quality because it's digital."



SKY PILOT: OPEN-AIR DRUMMING ON CLOUD NINE

project due to tour and record in 1999. This year Pete is performing two shows, one with Joji Hirota, and one with David Toop, both of which promise to be very interesting.

"I've got a project called *From Taiko To Tabla* which has Joji playing Japanese drums, shakuhachi, and congas and bongos in his own inspired fashion," he says. "And obviously I'm

YOU'LL HAVE GATHERED THAT ALONGSIDE HIS mainstream session career, Pete is involved in a lot of other weird and wonderful musical projects. As these rather gorgeous photos of his setup (which, incidentally, comprises only a fraction of all his percussive delights) indicate, his is no ordinary approach to drumming.

"One of the first difficulties when you're playing



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► so many different things, is choosing a setup, whether you're sitting on the floor, standing up or sitting on a stool. Most of the time I go for the sitting on the floor option, because it's the only position you can play tabla properly in, as you're controlling the angle of the bass drum with your knee – for the glissando – and the drum moves around a bit. So for a lot of projects I've built the setup around the floor, with this kit that Premier have built me on the left, a Meinl tambora, the top of a djembe sawn off, Meinl bongos, Zildjian cymbals, gongs and Zil-bels, djun-djuns at the back, and lots of different things. It's good to mix tablas with all sorts of percussion."

Pete designed the Premier kit himself to be played sitting down, but he's already aware of what some drummers might say when they see it...

"Well, it inevitably leads to comparisons with Trilok Gurtu," he sighs, "but that's like saying that all the drummers who sit on stools are copying each other. I think it's a thing that we're going to see more of."

Quite a lot of Pete's work – like his involvement with the last James Bond movie soundtrack – involves special effects, a lot of which he creates himself with a finely honed combination of technology and a warped mind...

"If you're going through an effects unit you can create a lot of interesting tonal delays and pitch

shifting things. You can make a percussive effect out of almost anything that makes a sound, really. Tie a load of budgerigars together and it would sound amazing!"

As would the local RSPB officer battering down the door. As I said at the start, Pete Lockett has enough philosophies and views about the drummer's art to fill several interviews. The same is true of his tips and advice to those at the beginning of their musical journey. To finish off, here are a few gems to get you thinking...

"There's getting good as a player – or accomplished, shall we say – and there's becoming a player who's in work; and they're completely different areas. To get good technically necessitates a little bit of obsession somewhere along the line. It's difficult because you don't want to be obsessive all your life, but to use the psychologist's parlance, you've got to have some drivers in there to put the work in, to get it down.

"The other important thing is to work out what you want to do. If you're a family man, if you like being at home, you're probably better off choosing to go the session route than ending up on a world tour for nine months. I think that's something you should think about early on; otherwise you can have a disparate angle, and once you get into one of those areas, work builds up along that line.

"So think about whether you want to be a

recording player or a touring player, or whether in fact you want to be writing. Drummers don't always think about that, and quite often they get a bum deal; they won't be getting writing royalties and they might not be getting that much money. And if they're a drummer in a band that's really big for a short while, they then get the disadvantage of being labelled as the 'drummer from X', which may not be any good for their future career prospects. So I think it's important for people to really consider what they want to do.

"And the final point," he says in conclusion, "is that you've got to be persistent about it. You've got to carry on, don't give up, don't be scared of phoning people up and saying, 'Hello, give me a job', or even, 'Give me all your money'." ♦

PETER LOCKETT PLAYS WITH DAVID TOOP AT RHYTHM STICKS ON SUNDAY JULY 19 IN THE PURCELL ROOM AT 7.30PM, AND ON SATURDAY 25 JULY WITH TAIKO TO TABLA CLUB MIX, ALSO IN THE PURCELL ROOM, BUT AT 10PM (STRAIGHT AFTER TRILOK GURTU IN THE QUEEN ELIZABETH HALL). FOR FURTHER DETAILS RING THE BOX OFFICE ON: 0171 960 4242